



The Principal's Office: A Social History of the American School Principal

Kate Rousmaniere

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The first comprehensive history of principals in the United States.

The Principal's Office is the first historical examination of one of the most important figures in American education. Originating as a head teacher in the nineteenth century and evolving into the role of contemporary educational leader, the school principal has played a central part in the development of American public education. A local leader who not only manages the daily needs of the school but also represents district and state officials, the school principal is the connecting hinge between classroom practice and educational policy. Kate Rousmaniere explores the cultural, economic, and political pressures that have impacted school leadership over time and considers professionalization, the experiences of women and people of color, and progressive community initiatives. She discusses the intersections between the role of the school principal with larger movements for civil rights, parental and community activism, and education reform. The school principal emerges as a dynamic character in the center of the educational enterprise, ever maneuvering between multiple constituencies, responding to technical and bureaucratic demands, and enacting different leadership strategies. By focusing on the historic development of school leadership, this book provides insights into the possibilities of school improvement for contemporary school leaders and reformers.

“Examining the history of ubiquitous objects is always a fascinating endeavor. The history of how principals became universal fixtures in public schools over the past two centuries is no less captivating ... This excellent work would be very useful for both a graduate or undergraduate class on the history of American education, an education class on the culture of public schools, as well as any general survey course on American social movements. It represents the best kind of work in education and history.” — *American Studies*

Kate Rousmaniere is Professor of Educational Leadership at Miami University of Ohio. She is the author of several books, including *Citizen Teacher: The Life and Leadership of Margaret Haley*, also published by SUNY Press.

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